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ABSTRACT

A comparison is made between the training and practice of school psychology in the U.S. and in Ontario, Canada. Results of a questionnaire completed by practicing school psychologists in the two countries are compared in terms of demographic data, 25 skill variables, and six role functions. It was found that, despite many differences in training and some different skill emphases, the actual role functions were, in practice, very similar. Some similarities in preferred role were also noted. (Author/BP)

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School Psychology has for the past decade or more been a rapidly expanding profession not only in the United States but in many parts of the world. Yet there seems to be no agreed upon role definition either here, or abroad (Ziv, 1974). We meet in international conferences, listen to each others' papers, compare notes and then return home wondering why the other person can't see the light: can't understand the "real" function of the school psychologist!

Yet there are little or no comparative data to aid us in understanding each other. This paper is a small attempt to rectify that problem. We are making no claims that we have discovered the real role of the school psychologist either in Canada or the United States but we do have data where the practitioners speak for themselves. In the brief time we have we will attempt to explain some of the data which have been given you with the hope that this will help you in reaching your own conclusions. You are very fortunate that time does not permit our going through each table item by item!

Method

Recently, Percy Peckham and I were gathering data for a study of school psychology in the United States. An analysis of these data, some of which are used in this paper, is soon to be published (Meacham and Peckham, in press). We were very fortunate to get an offer from Judith Schapira, the President of the Division of Psychologists in Education of the Ontario Psychological Association, to gather similar data for Ontario. She did a fine job and we have a sample from practitioners scattered throughout the Province. Ontario employs a relatively large number of school psychologists and, while we cannot claim that this sample represents all Canada, we have reason to believe that their training, practice, and aspirations are similar to other areas of Canada. The U.S. Sample is from 39 States and the District of Columbia. Data sheets were distributed by Division 16 of the APA, various State Associations, and by individuals. The

data sheet consists of three parts: The first asks for demographic data and these are summarized in Table 1. The second part deals with 25 skill variables under six role functions. The respondents were told to rate the emphasis on these skill variables in their training and in their practice. The ratings were on a five point scale with "1" indicating no emphasis and "5" indicating very much emphasis. These skill variables and role functions had been obtained from the perusal of over 100 training programs in addition to personal experiennce. The analysis of the skill variable data is given in Table 2. Part three asks the respondents to rank order the role functions (described in part two) as to their importance in training, present job, preferred job and as to their perceptions of their competence. These data are presented in Table 3. Finally, we were interested in congruence data at the individual level for both samples. Congruence was operationally definted as the within person correlation of the ranks under each pair of conditions. Thus, the four conditions (training, present job, preferred job, and competence) give rise to six pairs of conditions. These results are reported in Table 4.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Data: Table 1 describes both samples. We had 758 respondents in the United States and 107 in Ontario. Some interesting differences are: (1) while the U.S. sample has somewhat more males than females the Ontario sample almost exactly reverses these percentages. (2) While the predominant level of training is the M.A. there is slightly more emphasis on the Ph.D. in the U.S. sample and less on the B.A. (3) Both samples show a diversity of training with the Ontario sample showing a greater percentage coming through psychology and clinical psychology and the U.S. sample showing more emphasis on school psychology and educational psychology. There is an artifact here which may distort these data somewhat and that is that many school programs are located in other departments so that the degree title does not reflect the specific training. (4) Finally, there seems to be more time spent with special education by the U.S. psychologists than those from Ontario. The two samples are very similar in where they practice, being primarily urban, and in stability. They do not seem to change jobs very often.

Comparison of skill variables: Table 2 contains the comparisons of the two samples on each of the 25 skill variables under the conditions of training and practice. Thus there are 50 comparisons. In this table, the higher the mean

score the greater the emphasis for that particular skill. Since the difference of the means was determined by subtracting the U.S. mean from the Ontario mean, a positive t score indicates more emphasis by the Ontario sample and a negative t score indicates more emphasis by the U.S. sample. Two cautions in interpreting these data: (1) using multiple t's increases the probability of getting chance significant differences. However, the significance of many of the differences reported in Table 2 are highly reliable and we believe that any less than .01 are significant. (2) With the large N and concommitant large numbers of degrees of freedom, small Mean differences are statistically significant. There, "practical" significance is to some extent a matter of judgement. Let's look at a few examples to help you with reading the table. On the first page we see that the U.S. sample reports significantly more emphasis on personality testing in practice while the Ontario sample reports significantly more emphasis on group testing in practice. Finally, on the last page of Table 2 there is something that is very itneresting. The Ontario sample shows significantly more emphasis on developing and carrying out research in training but these differences tend to be reversed in practice.

Rank order of role functions: Table 3 gives the rank order of the role functions under the four conditions and the significance of difference of the mean rankings. In this Table a low score indicates a higher emphasis. Since we are still subtracting the U.S. mean from the Ontario Mean a positive t score indicates a higher ranking by the U.S. sample and a negative t score indicates a higher ranking by the Ontario sample. Under Training, the U.S. sample reports significantly more emphasis on assessment and interpretation while the Ontario group is much higher in research. But look at the "Present Job" rankings which give an operational definition of actual role. The rankings are identical and there are no significant differences between the means. So the two samples do pretty much the same thing in general although there is some variation (back to Table 2) in some of the skill applications. We also think it significant that both groups would prefer the consultant role as their first function, consulting based on assessment.

Mean correlations as an indication of congruence: Table 4 gives the mean correlations for each sample and the significance of difference of these correlations. None of the correlations are particularly large but the standard deviations are. Thus for individuals the correlations ranged from near zero to 1.0. The Table does show that the U.S. sample perceives significantly closer

relationship between their present job and their training than do the Ontario psychologists. They also see a closer relationship between their training and their competence. We trainers of school psychologists would like to think that these correlations reflect the fact that a greater percentage of the U.S. sample were trained in specific school psychology programs. But we are not sure that we can.

What does this all mean? We think that these data show some striking similarities between how school psychologists function in Canada and the United States. There are also some strong indications that we see the emerging role in a somewhat similar fashion. But most of all, we feel that it means that we have a lot in common and good reason for a contuing dialogue.

References

Meacham, M.L. and Peckham, P. School psychologists at three-quarters century: congruence between training, practice, preferred role and competence. Journal of School Psychology, in press.

Ziv, A. International aspects of school psychology. Journal of School Psychology, 1974, 12, 31-39.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY: CONGRUENCE BETWEEN TRAINING AND PRACTICE

These data are being collected from practicing school psychologists to help answer some of the questions that have been plaguing the profession for some time. Your answers will have implications for training and practice. The items have been gathered by perusing various training programs, conferring with practicing school psychologists, and from my own experience. Your help will be very much appreciated. Please return completed forms to: Dr. Merle L. Meacham, 318 Miller Hall DQ-12, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195.

Date:_____ (1) Age _____ (2) Sex _____ (3) Years of Practice _____

Training Institution(s): _____

(4) Highest Academic Degree: _____ (5) This degree in what field: _____

Where currently employed: (6) State _____ (7) Rural or Urban(circle one)
Rural is defined as under 2500 population. Urban as over 2500.

(8) Number of school psychology positions held since finishing training: _____

(9) Number of practicing school psychologists in your district(s): _____

(10) Number of children per school psychologist in your district(s): _____

(11) Proportion of time spent with special education children: _____

Please rate the following items for the emphasis on them in your training and in your current practice. (Do not include as "training" in-service or on-the-job training. Only that associated with an institutional program. An internship while in a formal program would be included.) Circle the appropriate number. (1)indicates no emphasis; (2)indicates little emphasis; (3)indicates moderate emphasis; (4)indicates much emphasis; (5)indicates very much emphasis.

SKILLS	TRAINING	PRACTICE
ASSESSMENT:		
12. Observation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Individual intelligence testing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. Individual personality testing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. Individual academic testing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. Group testing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. Interviewing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. Developmental analysis (testing and observation)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
REMEDIATION:		
19. Individual counseling	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
20. Group counseling	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
21. Family counseling	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
22. Behavior modification	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23. Educational planning for a child	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
INTERPRETATION & COMMUNICATION		
24. Written reports	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. Oral reports	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

SKILLS	TRAINING	PRACTICE
CONSULTING WITH:		
26. Administrators	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
27. Teachers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
28. Parents	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
29. Other professionals	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
30. The child	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
CHANGE AGENT:		
31. Program development	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
32. Curriculum development	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
33. Informal staff relations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
34. Staff skill development	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
RESEARCH:		
35. Developing research	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
36. Carrying out research	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
OTHER: (Specify)		
37.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
38.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Below are the role functions of the school psychologist described above. Please rank order them as to your perception of their importance ("Importance" being defined as percentage of time devoted to each) (1)being most important, (2) next, (3) next, etc. in each of three conditions. The conditions are: In your institutional training; on your present job; your preference for your present job. Finally rank your perception of your competence in each.

	TRAINING	PRESENT JOB	PREFERRED JOB	COMPETENCE
ASSESSMENT	_____	_____	_____	_____
REMEDIATION	_____	_____	_____	_____
INTERPRETATION	_____	_____	_____	_____
CONSULTING	_____	_____	_____	_____
CHANGE AGENT	_____	_____	_____	_____
RESEARCH	_____	_____	_____	_____
OTHER (SPECIFY)	_____	_____	_____	_____

Table 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLES

U.S. N 758	ONTARIO N 107
Age: M- 39.2 years S.D. 10.2 years	M 36.1 years S.D. 8.8 years
Sex:	
Males - 421 55.9%	Males - 48 44.9%
Females - 332 44.1%	Females - 59 55.1%
Years of Practice: M - 8.2 S.D. - 6.6	Years of Practice: M - 8.9 S.D. 6.5
No. of Training Institutions: 206	No. of Training Institutions: 24
Highest Academic Degree:	
B.A.6 or .8%	B.A. 11 or 10.4%
M.A. 523 or 71%	M.A. 74 or 69.8%
Ph.D. 206 or 28%	Ph.D. 21 or 19.8%
Degree Field: N %	N %
School Psychology 262 34.8	9 8.5
School Counseling 4 .5	
Psychology 137 18.2	43 40.6
Educational Psych. 169 22.5	9 8.5
Counseling Psych. 45 6.0	9 8.5
General Education 38 5.1	3 2.8
Special Education 16 2.1	1 .9
Clinical Psychology 40 5.3	20 18.9
Educ. Administration 6 .8	
Other 35 4.7	12 11.3
Location of Practice:	
Urban 643 or 84.8%	Urban 89 or 83.2%
Rural 90 or 11.9%	Rural 6 or 5.6%
Both 25 3.3%	Both 12 11.2%
Number of Positions Held:	
M - 1.6	M - 1.7
S.D. - 1.1	S.D. - 1.2
58.5% had held one position	58.5% had held one position
28.1% had held two positions	26.2% had held two positions
No. of School Psychologists per District(s):	
M - 18	M - 19
S.D. - 40	S.D. - 19
Median - 5	Median - 7
Children per Psychologist:	
M - 4556	M - 5466
S.D. - 8970	S.D. - 5739
Median - 3000	Median - 4500
Proportion of Time with Special Education:	
M - 51.5%	M - 34.2%
S.D. - 29.8%	S.D. - 21.9%
Median - 49.5%	Median - 28%

Table 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE ON SKILL VARIABLES BETWEEN ONTARIO AND U.S. SAMPLES IN TRAINING AND PRACTICE

Skill Variable	Mean	S.D.	t*	2-Tail Probability
Observation - Training				
Ontario	3.059	1.15	1.15	.250
U.S.	2.920	1.08		
Observation - Practice				
Ontario	3.641	1.11	.56	.573
U.S.	3.577	1.02		
Ind. Intelligence Tst. - Training				
Ontario	3.641	1.07	-6.32	< .001
U.S.	4.238	.87		
Ind. Intelligence Tst. - Practice				
Ontario	3.721	1.28	-2.27	.025
U.S.	4.018	1.01		
Ind. Personality Tst. - Training				
Ontario	3.048	1.27	-2.99	.003
U.S.	3.437	1.06		
Ind. Personality Tst. - Practice				
Ontario	2.552	1.19	-4.48	< .001
U.S.	3.108	1.19		
Ind. Academic Tst. - Training				
Ontario	2.330	1.32	-2.98	.003
U.S.	2.735	1.13		
Ind. Academic Tst. - Practice				
Ontario	3.391	1.36	.11	.910
U.S.	3.375	1.16		
Group Testing - Training				
Ontario	1.914	.97	.09	.930
U.S.	1.905	.94		
Group Testing - Practice				
Ontario	2.183	1.21	4.05	< .001
U.S.	1.680	.96		
Interviewing - Training				
Ontario	3.231	1.18	1.63	.106
U.S.	3.029	1.19		
Interviewing - Practice				
Ontario	4.196	.86	3.22	.002
U.S.	3.899	.99		

Table 2 (cont.)

Skill Variable	Mean	S.D.	t*	2-Tail Probability
Developmental Analysis - Training				
Ontario	3.030	1.17	-1.29	.199
U.S.	3.191	1.18		
Developmental Analysis - Practice				
Ontario	3.451	1.17	-3.07	.003
U.S.	3.827	1.02		
Individual Counseling - Training				
Ontario	2.971	1.28	-1.03	.306
U.S.	3.109	1.27		
Individual Counseling - Practice				
Ontario	3.223	1.18	-.45	.655
U.S.	3.279	1.18		
Group Counseling - Training				
Ontario	1.990	1.16	-2.46	.015
U.S.	2.291	1.19		
Group Counseling - Practice				
Ontario	1.931	1.03	-5.22	<.001
U.S.	2.516	1.24		
Family Counseling - Training				
Ontario	1.817	.94	-1.07	.285
U.S.	1.924	1.02		
Family Counseling - Practice				
Ontario	2.621	1.20	-.66	.508
U.S.	2.705	1.24		
Behavior Mod - Training				
Ontario	2.683	1.38	.95	.346
U.S.	2.548	1.25		
Behavior Mod - Practice				
Ontario	2.981	1.14	-2.90	.004
U.S.	3.327	1.13		
Educ. Planning, Child - Training				
Ontario	2.185	1.19	-5.30	<.001
U.S.	2.850	1.26		
Educ. Planning, Child - Practice				
Ontario	4.191	.87	-1.11	.268
U.S.	4.291	.90		
Written Reports - Training				
Ontario	3.359	1.20	-3.99	<.001
U.S.	3.853	1.04		

Table 2 (cont.)

Skill Variable	Mean	S.D.	t*	2-Tail Probability
Written Reports - Practice				
Ontario	3.859	1.02	-2.42	.017
U.S.	4.112	.96		
Oral Reports - Training				
Ontario	2.490	1.23	-.82	.413
U.S.	2.596	1.20		
Oral Reports - Practice				
Ontario	3.667	.95	.98	.330
U.S.	3.768	1.11		
Consult. with Administrators - Training				
Ontario	1.636	.98	-4.34	<.001
U.S.	2.102	1.14		
Consult. with Administrators - Practice				
Ontario	3.637	1.23	-4.03	<.001
U.S.	4.144	.92		
Consult. with Teachers - Training				
Ontario	2.102	1.14	-5.13	<.001
U.S.	2.736	1.18		
Consult. with Teachers - Practice				
Ontario	4.447	.80	-.30	.767
U.S.	4.471	.74		
Consult with Parents - Training				
Ontario	2.306	1.21	-4.57	<.001
U.S.	2.900	1.18		
Consult. with Parents - Practice				
Ontario	3.922	1.05	-3.82	<.001
U.S.	4.337	.85		
Consult. with Professionals - Training				
Ontario	2.465	1.21	-.77	.445
U.S.	2.563	1.15		
Consult. with Professionals - Practice				
Ontario	3.641	1.01	-1.99	.048
U.S.	3.851	.98		
Consult. with the Child - Training				
Ontario	2.763	1.28	-1.86	.065
U.S.	3.030	1.26		
Consult. with the Child - Practice				
Ontario	3.804	1.16	-.94	.349
U.S.	3.918	1.08		

Table 2 (cont.)

Skill Variable	Mean	S.D.	t*	2-Tail Probabil
Program Development - Training				
Ontario	2.021	1.23	-.67	.505
U.S.	2.108	1.15		
Program Development - Practice				
Ontario	3.228	1.22	-.26	.792
U.S.	3.262	1.15		
Curriculum Development - Training				
Ontario	1.577	.97	-3.20	.002
U.S.	1.915	1.06		
Curriculum Development - Practice				
Ontario	2.158	1.17	-3.33	.001
U.S.	2.571	1.16		
Informal Staff Relations - Training				
Ontario	1.790	1.06	-3.22	.002
U.S.	2.165	1.13		
Informal Staff Relations - Practice				
Ontario	3.404	1.11	-2.22	.028
U.S.	3.667	1.11		
Staff Skill Development - Training				
Ontario	1.771	1.08	-2.15	.034
U.S.	2.023	1.08		
Staff Skill Development - Practice				
Ontario	3.010	1.15	-2.03	.044
U.S.	3.257	1.16		
Developing Research - Training				
Ontario	3.796	1.07	5.83	<.001
U.S.	3.113	1.28		
Developing Research - Practice				
Ontario	1.880	.91	-1.80	.074
U.S.	2.059	1.66		
Carrying Out Research - Training				
Ontario	3.878	1.04	7.20	<.001
U.S.	3.046	1.38		
Carrying Out Research - Practice				
Ontario	1.760	.88	-2.81	.006
U.S.	2.031	1.09		

*A positive t indicates more emphasis by the Ontario sample. A negative t indicates more emphasis by the U.S. sample.

Table 3

Rank Order of Role Functions and Significance of Difference of Rankings*

Role Function	Training					Present Job					Preferred Job					Competence				
	M	S.D.	Rank	t	P	M	S.D.	Rank	t	P	M	S.D.	Rank	t	P	M	S.D.	Rank	t	P
Assessment:																				
Ontario	1.94	1.24	1	3.47	.001	1.77	1.09	1	-.78	.439	2.93	1.53	2	-.66	.508	1.94	1.22	1	.10	.923
U.S.	1.49	.99	1			1.86	1.32	1			3.04	1.63	2			1.93	1.26	1		
Remediation:																				
Ontario	3.72	1.54	5	1.06	.291	3.30	1.29	4	-1.15	.251	3.12	1.60	3	-2.34	.021	3.52	1.47	4	-.67	.507
U.S.	3.55	1.37	4			3.46	1.33	4			3.52	1.61	5			3.63	1.54	4		
Interpretation																				
Ontario	2.94	1.35	2	3.02	.003	2.90	1.20	3	1.26	.211	3.53	1.36	5	1.19	.236	3.03	1.35	3	2.02	.046
U.S.	2.51	1.15	2			2.74	1.21	3			3.35	1.50	4			2.74	1.33	3		
Consulting																				
Ontario	3.65	1.47	4	.71	.476	2.39	1.28	2	-1.26	.212	2.00	1.28	1	-.49	.627	2.51	1.39	2	.17	.868
U.S.	3.54	1.32	3			2.57	1.28	2			2.07	1.26	1			2.48	1.30	2		
Change Agent																				
Ontario	4.45	1.61	6	-.59	.558	4.23	1.41	5	1.32	.190	3.38	1.89	4	1.22	.227	4.26	1.80	5	1.67	.097
U.S.	4.55	1.49	6			4.03	1.44	5			3.13	1.68	3			3.94	1.61	5		
Research																				
Ontario	3.38	1.99	3	-4.48	.001	5.60	1.06	6	1.62	.108	4.81	1.54	6	.27	.788	4.47	1.74	6	-1.85	.066
U.S.	4.33	1.76	5			5.40	1.42	6			4.76	1.66	6			4.83	1.67	6		

* A positive t indicates a higher ranking by the U.S. Sample. A negative t indicates a higher ranking by the Ontario sample.

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Table 4

MEAN CONGRUENCE OF THE FOUR CONDITIONS
AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE FOR THE SAMPLES

Conditions	r	S.D.	t*	2-Tail Probability
Training-Present Job				
Ontario	.337	.46	-3.33	.001
U.S.	.509	.43		
Training-Preferred Job				
Ontario	.253	.49	-.19	.848
U.S.	.264	.52		
Training-Competence				
Ontario	.399	.42	-2.26	.026
U.S.	.505	.41		
Present Job-Preferred Job				
Ontario	.508	.43	-.33	.745
U.S.	.523	.44		
Present Job-Competence				
Ontario	.589	.39	-1.16	.249
U.S.	.639	.35		
Preferred Job-Competence				
Ontario	.585	.39	.54	.587
U.S.	.561	.40		

* A positive t indicates a higher congruence for the Ontario sample and a negative t a higher congruence for the U.S. sample.